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Chair: Mr. Hilale ..... (Morocco)
later: Ms. Kupradze (Vice-Chair) ..... (Georgia)

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The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Address by the President of the seventieth session of the General Assembly

1. **Mr. Lykketoft** (Denmark), President of the seventieth session of the General Assembly, said that it was by insisting on the dignity and worth of every human being and upholding such universal, indivisible and interdependent rights as the right to express dissent or criticism and the rights to peaceful assembly, development, education, food, health care, and a fair trial under an impartial rule of law, and freedom from torture and ill-treatment that the Member States would thrive. They must therefore renew their commitment to upholding all human rights without discrimination, which would require work across the three pillars of the United Nations, as was clear from the report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (A/70/12). In the greatest refugee crisis since World War II, over 60 million people, half of them children, had been forced by conflict and violence to leave their homes. Because no country could address the crisis alone, international solidarity was more needed than ever.

2. He had convened a formal plenary meeting in November 2015 to consider agenda item 130, Global awareness of the tragedies of irregular migrants in the Mediterranean basin, with specific emphasis on Syrian asylum seekers, to be preceded two days earlier by an informal meeting of the Assembly dealing with the problems in the Mediterranean, the humanitarian crises in Africa and Yemen and other situations. The meetings would be a unique opportunity to reflect on the collective international response to the global crisis and advance a comprehensive humanitarian approach. All countries must meet their obligations under international refugee law, and political solutions to associated conflicts and violence must be found.

3. Prosperous, inclusive and sustainable development was essential to resolving the crises. The 2030 Agenda could serve as a catalyst for Governments to meet human rights obligations. Its implementation required respect for human rights and also required that the basic elements of good governance were in place. The General Assembly, and the Second and Third Committees in particular, must adapt to the new agenda and its follow-up processes. There should be reflection on how the United Nations could build on the successful multi-stakeholder approach used in the negotiations leading up to the formulation of the Sustainable Development Goals. To spur early progress on implementation, there would be a high-level thematic debate in July 2016, focusing on the role of the United Nations in the field of human rights, including the relationship to rule of law, governance, gender equality and institution-building. Particular attention would be focused on the needs of the millions of men, women and children affected by conflicts and disasters.

Agenda item 65: Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, questions relating to refugees, returnees and displaced persons and humanitarian questions (A/69/12/Add.1, A/70/12 and A/70/337)

4. **Mr. Guterres** (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) said that for the first time in many years, refugee protection was the focus of international attention and the centre of discussion in all relevant forums. Hundreds of thousands of arrivals in Europe in recent months had contributed to that, but the problem was in fact global. As a result of war and persecution, there were 60 million forcibly displaced persons in the world. In the past five years, 15 conflicts had arisen or been reignited, and the number of people forced from their homes every single day had nearly quadrupled, from under 11,000 in 2010, to 42,500 in 2014. The corresponding increase in humanitarian needs had overwhelmed the global response capacity. The international multilateral humanitarian community, consisting of United Nations agencies, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent movement and non-governmental organizations, was no longer able to provide the core protection and basic life-saving assistance that refugees needed and to which they were entitled.

5. The mega-crises in the Syrian Arab Republic and Iraq had uprooted over 15 million people. In 2015, some two million people had been displaced as a result of the conflict in Yemen. In Libya, 300,000 had been displaced. In the largest protracted refugee situation, over 2.5 million registered Afghan refugees remained in the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. While more Afghans were choosing to return home than had done so in 2014, the challenges to sustainable reintegration remained.

6. In Africa, the continued violence in South Sudan had left 1.6 million internally displaced, in addition to

760,000 refugees in the neighbouring countries. In the Central African Republic, 415,000 refugees had been uprooted within the country, and 470,000 people from the Central African Republic were refugees elsewhere. The situation in that country had again deteriorated recently. Violence in north-eastern Nigeria had forced over 2.5 million people to flee their homes, and more than 200,000 Burundians had sought refuge in the neighbouring countries since the start of the crisis in April. Nearly a million Somalis were living in neighbouring States as registered refugees, mainly in Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda and Yemen, with significant economic, social and environmental consequences. The ongoing crisis had also caused security problems in many parts of Somalia.

7. There had been little improvement in the situation in Ukraine, which had displaced at least 2.6 million internally and abroad. Since 2014, 94,000 people had crossed the Bay of Bengal and the Andaman Sea in search of protection and a more dignified life. And tens of thousands of people, many of them children, continued to flee horrific gang violence and abuse in Central America.

8. Globalization was asymmetrical. Money moved freely, and global trade had been growing. But people still faced enormous obstacles to movement. That was one of the major sources of inequality in the world today. Paradoxically, human movement was tightly restricted, yet conflict and violence were forcing more and more people to flee their home countries. Thus, hundreds of thousands of people had no other option but to put their lives into the hands of unscrupulous smugglers. Criminal gangs were making billions from the desperate situation, in complete disregard for human lives and dignity.

9. Since January, 750,000 people had arrived on European shores. More than 3,400 had drowned, with the death toll rising quickly as the weather worsened. Additional European support was urgently needed to ensure effective search and rescue. The previous week, there had been 13 shipwrecks off the coast of Greece, with over 150 people dead or missing, including dozens of children.

10. On the Greek islands alone, there were between 6,000 and 8,000 arrivals a day. The European Union had the capacity to manage the crisis, but, to do that, a united and comprehensive regional approach was essential. The decision to relocate 160,000 asylum seekers within the European Union was a step in the right direction, but implementation had been far too slow. Procedures and adequate reception arrangements must be established near the entry points to assist, register and screen tens of thousands of people. Rapid implementation of the decisions taken at the recent meeting of leaders on the Western Balkans route was needed to improve the untenable situation on the beaches and borders of Europe.

11. The situation was both a migration and a refugee crisis. The arrivals' human dignity and human rights must be respected. States had an obligation under international law to grant protection to refugees fleeing conflict and persecution. The arrivals in Italy had resulted from a range of situations, including African conflicts, chaos in Libya and the imbalance in economic and demographic trends for Africa and Europe.

12. The Valletta summit on migration to be held in Malta later in November would provide an opportunity to devise a new compact of common development cooperation policies that took human mobility into account more effectively. Europe and Africa needed a common strategy to enable people to have a future in their own countries. Some projects inadvertently contributed to people being uprooted. Migration should be an option, not a necessity, an expression of hope, not of despair.

13. Most arrivals in the Eastern Mediterranean were from the Syrian Arab Republic, Iraq and Afghanistan, and were likely to be in need of international protection. Syrian refugees accounted for most of the enormous spike in arrivals in Europe in 2015. That had been caused by three factors. First, many had lost hope in the possibility of a political solution to end the war. Second, after years in exile, most of the Syrian refugees in the neighbouring countries had depleted what savings they had, with living conditions steadily deteriorating. Seven out of ten Syrian refugees in Lebanon lived in extreme poverty, and in Jordan, the proportion of refugees in urban areas living below the Jordanian poverty line was 86 per cent. Refugees across the region were unable to work legally, and over half of the refugee children were not receiving any education. The third factor, which was in fact triggering the recent waves of arrivals, was the shortfall in humanitarian funding. For months, the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees had been struggling to continue supporting the growing

number of extremely vulnerable families with cash and shelter items, especially ahead of the coming winter. However, earlier in the year, the World Food Programme had been forced to cut its assistance by 30 per cent, making many refugees feel that the international community was starting to abandon them.

14. While in recent weeks, there had been important new announcements of financial support to refugees in the neighbouring countries to strengthen the humanitarian support provided during the winter and into 2016, those additional funds would not address the wider problem refugee assistance organizations must face. That had to do with the urgent imperative to review how humanitarian response was funded. It was clear that humanitarian resources alone were vastly insufficient to respond to the enormous increase in needs. Support to host countries was also essential, and the international community had not done enough in that area.

15. During the preceding year, the Office of the High Commissioner had had to focus heavily on emergency response, which had strained capacities and resources across the organization. It had reinforced its institutional emergency response capacity through a reconfigured structure and a new policy framework that clarified accountabilities, internal leadership and coordination arrangements. It had fielded over 650 emergency deployment missions in 2014 and 2015 and supported emergency operations from its network of seven global stockpiles.

16. It had assisted States with development of national asylum systems and made progress in implementation of the global strategy on alternatives to detention launched in 2014. Child protection remained a priority area, given the increase in asylum applications lodged by unaccompanied children. An additional 260,000 children had received access to schools, and refugees had been better integrated into several national educational systems. The Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees had also enhanced its capacity for prevention of and response to sexual and gender-based violence at the onset of emergencies.

17. A global campaign to end statelessness by 2024 had been under way for exactly a year. Since 2011, there had been nearly 50 accessions to the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness, and several States had made progress in establishing statelessness determination procedures or introducing gender equality in nationality laws. Efforts to confirm nationality had succeeded for thousands of people in Côte d'Ivoire, the Kyrgyz Republic, Malaysia, the Russian Federation and Thailand. Statelessness would remain a priority in the years to come.

18. There had been progress in efforts to change traditional approaches to humanitarian assistance, including strategies to move away from a care and maintenance model and towards a more professional, systematic and market-based approach to self-reliance and livelihoods wherever possible. There were tools for assessing the potential for alternatives to camps, and progress had been made in some States to include refugees in national public services. Use of cash-based interventions to replace or complement in-kind assistance was being rapidly expanded.

19. However, all of those measures were being undermined by the dramatic financial gap. With the explosion in humanitarian needs inevitably outpacing the very generous support of the donor community, the gap between requirements and available resources was steadily growing. The current funding level for the 34 United Nations appeals to provide humanitarian assistance to 82 million people around the world was only 46 per cent. The Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees expected to receive less than half of the funding it needed during the current year. It had avoided meaningful reductions of direct support to refugee families, but at high cost to its other activities.

20. Most urgently, there was a deficit of $205 million in Africa against expenditures that had already been authorized, including for the establishment of 14 new camps and the expansion of seven others. Unearmarked resources could not cover that deficit.

21. Funding cuts by the World Food Programme had resulted in a reduction of 34 per cent in rations for millions of refugees and others who depended almost entirely on food assistance. Even with the recently announced support, there remained an enormous gap to fill.

22. Donors had given the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees a record $3.3 billion in 2014. However, it was clear that humanitarian budgets were not sufficient to cover even the bare minimum, and the results of that were becoming visible. A key element in effective response to humanitarian crises

was a much closer link between humanitarian and development interventions that went beyond the traditional concept of bridging the gap. Development actors, supported by development budgets, had to work side by side with humanitarian actors from the very beginning of a crisis to help prevent further conflict, support host communities and pave the way for durable solutions. Large-scale humanitarian crises could create enormous structural problems for host countries and threaten to reverse the development gains of several years. Development actors must be granted more flexibility and better tools to act early and quickly to prevent a new spiral of fragility and instability, and to stabilize and build resilience. To achieve that, a fundamental review of the strategies and policies of bilateral and multilateral development cooperation was needed.

23. Countries that hosted large numbers of refugees, thus producing a global public good, deserved particular attention. Many such States were crucial pillars of peace and stability in their regions, forming the first line of defence of collective security as conflicts and terrorism threatened to spill across borders. However, while their role was crucial, a significant number of those countries were middle-income countries that were forgotten or even excluded from bilateral and multilateral development cooperation mechanisms. All relevant partners should engage such forums as the Group of 7, the Group of 20 and the boards of international financial institutions to bring about the necessary policy changes to provide better support for those countries.

24. The Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees had been working hard to strengthen its partnership with development actors such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the International Trade Centre, to enhance economic opportunities for refugees. Cooperation with the World Bank had resulted in regional forced displacement studies and technical programme support in Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda, and in the provision of substantial concessional loans to the Governments of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Zambia to assist internally displaced persons or integrate former refugees.

25. For the vast majority of refugees, achieving durable solutions and rebuilding their lives remained a distant dream. In 2014, only 126,000 refugees had been able to repatriate, which was the lowest number in over three decades. Although some 100,000 had been resettled in 2014, that figure represented only 15 per cent of the global resettlement needs for that year. The number of refugees being offered local integration opportunities was even lower.

26. The Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees had therefore been focusing on new approaches, emphasizing comprehensive solutions strategies and working with partners and Governments to strengthen refugees' resilience and self-reliance in the short term and to prepare for solutions in the future.

27. Most important, however, was to understand and address the root causes of displacement. That would be the theme of the High Commissioner's Dialogue on Protection Challenges: Protection gaps and responses, to be held in December, where myriad factors leading to displacement, including conflict over resources, poor governance, human rights violations or unequal access to development benefits would be considered. Of course, armed conflict was the biggest driver of displacement. Only when those who financed, armed and supported the parties to current conflicts were able to overcome their differences and end the bloodshed would there be real improvement.

28. People were also increasingly being forced to abandon their homes as a result of the interaction between the effects of population growth, food and energy insecurity and water scarcity. Climate change was clearly accelerating the other trends. A meaningful and universal agreement on cutting greenhouse gases must be achieved. States must also account for the growth of migration and displacement related to climate change and take proactive measures to relocate populations that were at risk.

29. The Nansen Initiative, a ground-breaking State-led consultative process spearheaded by Norway and Switzerland, had recently resulted in the adoption of an agenda to address the needs of people displaced across borders by the effects of climate change, a situation for which there was no provision in existing international norms. States should lend their full support to the implementation of that agenda. The Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees stood ready to contribute to the process.

30. The World Humanitarian Summit in 2016 would be a major opportunity to ensure that the humanitarian system as a whole was able to respond to those

growing challenges. Critical issues on the agenda that had the full support of the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees included promoting better accountability to the people being assisted and the urgency of finding solutions to protracted displacement. Protection must be central to humanitarian action, including through the effective participation of the people cared for, utilizing their capacities and supporting the communities in which they lived.

31. The Summit should not ignore the humanitarian-development connection and the imperative of building a more inclusive humanitarian system that better reflected the universal character of the values guiding humanitarian work and made it possible to join the capacities of all humanitarian actors in the response. Organizations from different cultural backgrounds sometimes worked in parallel without effective coordination, resulting in gaps and overlaps. That only hurt those who were supposed to be helped.

32. Translating perspectives from one part of the world into a one-size-fits-all approach could never result in a truly universal humanitarian community. To move beyond the essentially Western creation that was the present multilateral system and build a more universal partnership, it was necessary to focus on the common basis of fundamental humanitarian values, which was often overlooked. The world's major religions and cultures all shared the same principles of compassion and welcome, helping people in need and sheltering persecuted strangers.

33. It was possible to expand on that common basis to build a system that recognized the diversity of expressions and perspectives and allowed for more openness and systematic collaboration in the service of those the humanitarian community cared for, guided by the principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence.

34. The European refugee crisis had highlighted the crucial importance of preserving the fundamental principles of tolerance, respect for diversity and solidarity with those in need. Those principles would provide the best tools for managing present and future challenges.

35. All nations and communities were becoming multi-faith, multi-ethnic and multicultural. That was inevitable, and it was a good thing. Building and maintaining tolerant and open societies capable of responding positively to fears and anxieties is a slow and delicate process requiring significant investments from Governments and civil society alike. But diversity enriched people, and its benefits far outweighed the costs of such investments.

36. The acts of kindness of millions of individuals in host communities across the world continued to demonstrate, day after day, that tolerance and solidarity ran deeply in the hearts of humanity. Those values were the strongest tools and the best protection in addressing the challenges ahead.

37. **Ms. Mansouri** (Algeria) said that her Government agreed with the High Commissioner that in the absence of political solutions to conflicts, there was an urgent need for support for host States that provided protection to millions of refugees on behalf of the international community. Since 1975, Algeria had hosted Saharawi refugees, and was now hosting large numbers of Syrian refugees, as well as refugees from Libya, Mali, Niger and other sub-Saharan countries. The Office of the High Commissioner should increase its focus on protracted refugee situations by allocating adequate resources to those situations and taking into account the increased needs of programmes, particularly in Africa. Further information about measures the Office of the High Commissioner was taking to respond to recent flooding in the Saharawi refugee camps, including action taken jointly with other emergency agencies, would be appreciated.

38. **Ms. Stener** (Norway) said that conflicts were increasingly protracted, and many refugees faced years away from their homes. The level of voluntary repatriation was historically low, and finding durable solutions for refugees was a challenge. She asked the High Commissioner to elaborate further on ways that the international community could come together more strategically to prevent, respond to and find solutions to issues of displacement. Her delegation agreed that forced displacement was not only a humanitarian issue. The whole 2030 Agenda was key to tackling the challenge.

39. The efforts of the High Commissioner to cooperate closely with development actors such as the United Nations Development Programme and the World Bank were encouraging and set a good example. Education in an emergency was a priority for Norway, which appreciated the emphasis on the importance of education for protection outcomes. Norway was also

concerned about the large numbers of people, including many children, who had lost their lives at sea. The new emphasis on rescue at sea was commendable. She also wondered how the immediate protection needs of refugees traveling along the various migrant routes could be addressed.

40. **Mr. Jabbar** (Iraq) expressed thanks to the High Commissioner for Refugees and his Office for the establishment of two new camps for internally displaced persons in Baghdad the previous September. The Special Rapporteur on the human rights of internally displaced persons had made a visit to Iraq in May 2015. During the visit, he had learned about major challenges the country faced in addressing that significant humanitarian issue, especially given the impact of the drop in oil prices on the national economy, as well as the repercussions of destruction and looting by Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) in regions that had been liberated by the security forces, local populations and tribal groups. Fear of atrocities had resulted in the displacement of more than 3 million people. In addition, there were 270,000 refugees in Iraq. That very high number included many women, children and elderly people, as well as persons with illnesses and disabilities.

41. Decent housing, sanitation, education, and other basic services were required to meet the needs of those populations. Despite security and financial difficulties, the Government had adopted emergency measures to address the challenge, and had been able to assimilate the large number of displaced persons. Explosives, mines and improvised explosive devices left by ISIL were also a source of problems. The terrorist organization had destroyed homes and infrastructure, including bridges, and committed acts of brutality.

42. He wondered how the response of donors seeking to address the situation of internally displaced persons in Iraq was assessed. Second, in the context of efforts to address sexual violence, he wished to know whether the High Commissioner for Refugees had programmes for internally displaced women who were victims of sexual violence, to aid with their rehabilitation and reintegration into society.

43. **Ms. Mballa Eyenga** (Cameroon) said that the burden of hosting was heavy for middle-income countries such as Cameroon. More active solidarity was needed. The High Commissioner had made a recommendation in regard to increased tolerance, understanding, solidarity and acceptance of other cultures. It would be helpful to hear additional concrete information about that recommendation.

44. **Mr. Elbahi** (Sudan) said that refugees in urban areas represented a particular challenge to host States. Information on the plans of the Office of the High Commissioner to support affected countries would be appreciated. Jointly with the Office of the High Commissioner, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and concerned States in East Africa, the Government of the Sudan had organized and hosted a regional conference on human trafficking in October 2014. The conference had adopted the Khartoum Declaration. He wished to hear more about views on provision of technical support to the countries in the region that were affected, in order to build and promote their capacities.

45. **Ms. Salim** (Libya) said that stability and security were foundations of and key factors in protecting and promoting the fundamental human rights of individuals. Libya was going through a very difficult time characterised by a lack of political stability and deterioration in the security situation owing to the proliferation of weapons. That had led to an increase in the number of internally displaced persons.

46. With regard to illegal migration and the wave of illegal migrants that had affected the Mediterranean region recently, the Libyan authorities had done their utmost to ensure respect for the rights of those illegal migrants and combat trafficking and trading in migrants, so as to protect their rights. The Libyan authorities were trying to address the dangers migrants faced, as well as exploitation by the criminal gangs that were smuggling and trafficking them for financial gain. Libya believed that illegal migration was not a unilateral or bilateral challenge, but rather one that all countries of the world faced, although they were affected to varying degrees. Libya was not a source of migrants, but rather a transit country. The Libyan authorities were working with the European Union to address illegal migration and save the lives of migrants in the Mediterranean.

47. **Mr. Hassani Nejad Pirkouhi** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that all forms of violence against humanitarian personnel were to be condemned. Conflict, foreign occupation and terrorism had contributed to the displacement of huge numbers of people, and the role of the High Commissioner for

Refugees was growing in significance. The lack of support from the international community to host countries, which were mostly developing and middle-income countries, was a source of concern. Resettlement and repatriation rates remained disappointingly low. In view of the current dire situation, the international community must demonstrate compassion, commitment and support for refugees and the countries hosting them, some of which had been doing so for decades.

48. **Mr. Rabi** (Morocco) said that more than 100 humanitarian workers had been killed in 2014. The international community must call tirelessly for the protection of humanitarian workers and encourage respect for their mission. The delegation of Morocco supported increased cooperation between the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees and the Office of Internal Oversight Services, especially through a recently signed memorandum on modifications to internal audit procedures. It welcomed the changes in the way the Office of the High Commissioner managed its financial resources, and also welcomed the 2013 Strategic Framework for the Prevention of Fraud and Corruption. Registration of refugees was absolutely crucial to realization of the mission of the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees, which encompassed the three aspects of international protection, provision of assistance and pursuit of lasting solutions. For many years, the Security Council had been calling for registration of the refugees in the Tindouf camps. An update on that activity would be appreciated.

49. **Mr. Giorgio** (Eritrea) said that the Office of the High Commissioner should continue to work in partnership and full cooperation with relevant national authorities in order to make objective assessments with regard to countries of origin, transit and destination. Appropriate application of the prima facie approach to granting status to certain nationalities had its own merit. Caution must be exercised so that it did not become a pull factor. Dialogue with representatives of countries of origin, in particular, would be valuable to assess facts on the ground. Vigilance was necessary with regard to the recruitment of asylum seekers by armed elements at reception centres or refugee camps, to assure the safety of those vulnerable groups of people.

50. **Ms. Nguele Makouelet** (Congo) said that there was much concern in the Congo over the June 2015 announcement that, owing to budgetary constraints, the Field Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees in Impfono, Congo would be closed as of 1 January 2016. That area hosted more registered refugees than any other area in the Republic of the Congo. Moreover, the situation in the Central African Republic remained unstable, resulting in continued mass arrivals of refugees. Her delegation therefore joined the appeal of the High Commissioner to donors and hoped that there would be a change in plans and that the Field Office would not close.

51. **Mr. Canay** (Turkey) said that his Government agreed with the assessment of the High Commissioner that the international aid system was failing and was unable to give hope to millions of the displaced. In view of the pressing need to address the plight of the forcibly displaced, assistance provided through enhanced collaboration could not be decoupled from the reality of current conflicts. There would be continued discussions on ways to reform the aid system, with the World Humanitarian Summit, to be held in Istanbul in 2016, the most important of those.

52. **Mr. Guterres** (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) said that the camps in Tindouf had indeed been dramatically affected by flooding. Immediate assistance had been provided based on what was available on the ground, and there had been coordination meetings between the refugees, local authorities, the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees and the other agencies. In the coming two days, 1,500 family tents, 10,000 plastic sheets, 400 plastic rolls, 10,000 blankets and 2,000 jerry cans and kitchen sets would be airlifted, as would shelter materials to repair buildings. Other agencies and donors were being mobilized to support those efforts.

53. Child protection, especially in the context of rescue at sea, was a priority for the Office of the High Commissioner. Norway was to be commended for making education a central issue in the international debate on refugee protection. The High Commissioner had participated in the Education Summit in Oslo and would be fully supportive of Norwegian initiatives.

54. Excellent cooperation between countries of origin, transit and destination and international organizations operating in those countries was needed to protect and provide support to people on the various migrant routes. The Office of the High Commissioner was quite involved in the Khartoum Process. However, as the situation in the Balkans had shown, establishing

cooperation mechanisms among all involved States was not always easy. With the approach of winter, all possible efforts would be made to provide assistance wherever it was lacking.

55. The international community was not doing enough to fight human trafficking and human smuggling. Many smuggling operations were carried out very openly. They were announced on the Internet, the operators were widely known, and the equipment that was used was easily detected. More cooperation among countries, intelligence services, police departments and coast guards was needed to fight smuggling networks actively and effectively. Human trafficking should be tackled with the same force as drug trafficking. Perhaps because Government officials felt that their own children were more at risk from drugs than from possible human trafficking, drug trafficking had received more resources. However, given the numbers of people dying in the Mediterranean, the Caribbean, the Andaman Sea and the Gulf of Aden, the moment had come to crack down on human trafficking and protect the victims. The Office of the High Commissioner would be pleased to cooperate in such efforts.

56. Humanitarian action in Iraq had been dramatically underfunded in the recent past, perhaps because there was a perception that Iraq was a rich country with large oil reserves. However, given the drop in oil prices and the high cost of security requirements, the Government of Iraq was having difficulties responding to the situation. Not enough had been done for the people of Iraq. The crisis in Iraq was very closely linked to the Syrian crisis, and there was no reason to make a distinction between them in setting priorities. There was a programme in Iraq, in coordination with the authorities, to address gender-based and sexual violence. However, the problem was of such a scale that what the Office of the High Commissioner was able to do was a mere drop in the ocean compared to what was needed to address the challenges of gender-based violence in such a complex conflict.

57. The lack of support from the international community with regard to the crisis in the Central African Republic was glaringly evident. The programme for supporting refugees from that country was funded at 20 per cent, the lowest level of any operation of the Office worldwide, with a deficit between expenditures and needs of 80 million dollars. The Office would see what it could do with regard to the situation in Impfono mentioned by the representative of Congo. The development agencies and bilateral development cooperation projects should make those countries that protected refugees and assured collective security a priority in their work.

58. Urban programmes were gaining ground in UNHCR planning and resource mobilization. They were relevant to the issue of integrating refugees into local economies, in keeping with the strategy the Office of the High Commissioner had proposed. There would be increasing contact with donors to stress the urban refugee programmes. The Commissioner had discussed support for urban programmes in Sudan with a high official in the Ministry of the Interior of Sudan. The High Commissioner strongly supported the Khartoum-Rome process. In addition to technical support, development cooperation was also needed in order to enable countries of origin and transit to address the enormous challenges they were facing.

59. He agreed with the remarks made by the representative of Libya. Recent decisions by the Government of Iran to provide access to education to all Afghan children, both those registered as refugees and those not legally in the country, and to grant access for refugees to the national health insurance system, were greatly appreciated. However, resources and burden-sharing in refugee protection were far below expectations.

60. While registration was a standard operation for the Office of the High Commissioner, it could be done only with the consent of the host country, as it was a matter of national sovereignty.

61. Usually a prima facie approach was related to situations of open conflict, while most other situations were dealt with as individual refugee status determinations. The Office worked actively in support of Member States to make sure that process was as objective as possible. Recruitment of refugees and asylum seekers was a major concern, and the Office was doing its utmost, in cooperation with national authorities, to guarantee the civilian and humanitarian character of asylum and to avoid, at all costs, the use of refugee settings for the recruitment of fighters.

62. Turkey was currently the country hosting the largest number of refugees in the world and had played a crucial role in refugee hosting in the recent past, at great cost to the Turkish budget. Already, $8 billion

had been spent in direct costs to aid Syrian refugees. The conclusions of the World Humanitarian Forum, to take place in Istanbul in 2016, were awaited with great hope and interest. Turkey was currently the chair of the Group of 20, which should serve as a source of guidance on linkages between development and refugee assistance. Development priorities should be increasingly oriented towards those countries that were in the first line of refugee protection.

63. **Ms. Klein** (Madagascar), speaking on behalf of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), said that the issue of refugees, returnees and displaced persons represented a serious challenge and a major obstacle to development and the global fight against poverty. At the end of 2014, there had been nearly 60 million persons in situations of forced displacement, the highest number ever recorded. That was of great concern. Sub-Saharan Africa hosted 26 per cent of refugees worldwide, as well as more than 11 million internally displaced persons. In the SADC countries, there were more than 130,000 refugees, 1,500 returnees and 270,000 asylum seekers from within and outside the region, as well as returnees.

64. Despite ongoing efforts to find a permanent solution to the problems through the consolidation of peace and other approaches, recurrent insecurity, political instabilities and conflicts in Southern Africa, particularly in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the neighbouring countries, had resulted in the movement of thousands of people. Mindful of the need to further constructively and adequately engage in tackling the root causes of the issue, SADC reiterated its commitment to the full implementation of the July 1996 memorandum of understanding between SADC and the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees on cooperation in the area of refugees and forced population movements.

65. SADC reiterated its attachment to the principles enshrined in the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees, as well as the Organization of African Unity Convention governing the specific aspects of refugee problems in Africa, which was the key instrument governing refugee protection in Africa. SADC also reaffirmed the commitments announced in the 1998 Declaration of Heads of State or Government of the Southern African Development Community on Refugee Protection within Southern Africa, which addressed the root causes of refugee movement and internal displacement within SADC and through the establishment of a firm foundation for democratic institutions and good governance.

66. The 2005 SADC Protocol on Facilitation of the Movement of Persons aimed to eliminate obstacles to the movement of persons in the territories of the States parties, reiterating in its article 28 the commitment of States members of SADC to their obligations under international agreements to which they were parties. The SADC Strategic Indicative Plan for the Organ on Politics, Defence and Security for the period 2010 through 2013 addressed refugees, social reintegration and specified the need to harmonize policies on, procedures for and management of refugees, in accordance with United Nations and African Union positions and practices.

67. Speaking in his national capacity, he said that while Madagascar had a very small number of refugees, returnees, asylum seekers and internally displaced persons, it remained alert to the issue. Heavy rains struck the island every year, leaving many internally displaced persons. The national authorities continuously mobilized all necessary resources to provide assistance to those who were forced as a result to leave their homes and lands, and remained watchful through the processes of monitoring, resilience and risk reduction and management.

68. *Ms. Kupradze (Georgia), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.*

69. **Mr. Whiteley** (Observer for the European Union), speaking also on behalf of the candidate countries Albania, Serbia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey; the stabilization and association process country Bosnia and Herzegovina; and, in addition, the Republic of Moldova, said that it was owing to the personal commitment and advocacy efforts of the High Commissioner for Refugees that the institution of asylum remained widely respected throughout the world. The High Commissioner had also been a strong advocate of an effective humanitarian system over the past decade. In Europe, more than 750,000 people had applied for asylum in the first nine months of 2015, a trend that would continue.

70. Devastating conflicts in the Syrian Arab Republic and part of Iraq, poverty and unrest in Afghanistan, the Horn of Africa and West Africa and chaos in Libya had

pushed masses of people to move to neighbouring countries and to Europe. In 2015, more than one million refugees and migrants had arrived in Europe, coming mainly via the Greek islands and the central Mediterranean. Arrivals in the Greek islands through 26 October 2015 were up tenfold compared to the same period in 2014. Most of those who had arrived in Greece were trying to reach other European countries via the Western Balkan routes.

71. The European Union had taken steps to address human trafficking and the use of dangerous avenues to seek protection. Reinforcement of maritime joint operations coordinated by the European Union in the Mediterranean had directly contributed to the rescue of more than 208,000 people in distress at sea.

72. The number of refugees living in protracted situations was rising, with the average length of time a refugee spent in exile currently believed to be approaching 20 years. Globally, only about 125,000 refugees were able to return home, the lowest level in three decades. More must be done to prevent forced displacement and address its root causes. As the High Commissioner had stressed, the problems could not be solved by the humanitarian community alone. Political and development actors had a crucial role to play. The current migration crisis was a challenge shared by transit and destination countries. Joint action was required.

73. Humanitarian organizations were under enormous pressure to deliver. At the same time, aid delivery was becoming increasingly complex. It was important to reconfirm the core humanitarian principles and stress the importance of respect for international humanitarian law and refugee law.

74. The number of unaccompanied minors seeking asylum had risen dramatically in recent years, representing nearly 4 out of 100 asylum applicants in the European Union in 2014. In 2015, those numbers appeared to be at similar levels.

75. Financial support for the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees was at its highest level ever, with more than $3.3 billion contributed in 2014. The number of donors had also been expanding. In 2014, support from the European Union and its member States had equalled more than $1.017 million, or 30 per cent of the total income of the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees. However, substantial needs remained unmet.

76. The vast majority of forcibly displaced persons were in protracted situations and had specific needs, such as access to education, health care, the labour market and infrastructure. Their human potential must be stimulated to achieve self-reliance and sustainable livelihoods. Productive individuals should have more opportunities to contribute to the development of host countries, including with the expertise of development actors.

77. The European Union had in 2014 launched its first Regional Development and Protection Programme, in the Middle East. Actions focused on improving protection in host countries and enhancing local and national capacity for those working with refugees and supporting local host communities. Similar programmes had recently been set up for North Africa and the Horn of Africa. The recently inaugurated European Union Emergency Trust Fund for stability and addressing root causes of irregular migration and displaced persons in Africa, with an initial volume of more than 18 billion euros, included among its core objectives support for job creation and access to social services, including for forcibly displaced populations. A similar trust fund for the Syrian Arab Republic focused on addressing the increasingly protracted nature of the displacements stemming from the crisis in that country.

78. Strategic reflection on enhancing linkages between humanitarian and development assistance in protracted situations was currently ongoing.

79. It was also important to tackle racism and xenophobia by raising the awareness among the citizens of countries receiving asylum seekers to the core human values guiding the commitment to protect those who were fleeing conflict and persecution.

80. **Mr. Yaremenko** (Ukraine), speaking on behalf of the Organization for Democracy and Economic Development-GUAM, said that until the root causes of the migration crisis were effectively addressed, civilians would continue to pay a heavy toll, and refugees would keep coming. The international community should therefore redouble efforts to facilitate the resolution of conflicts, particularly those relating to respect for territorial integrity and inviolability of the internationally recognized borders of States, help countries restore sovereignty over their own territories and offer sustainable solutions to the affected populations.

81. Most of the States members of GUAM continued to face large-scale displacement and the need to address the immediate and long-term needs of displaced populations. The political and financial support provided to those countries in that regard was welcomed. Further engagement by the international community was needed to aid in the search for sustainable solutions for millions of refugees and internally displaced persons in the territory of the GUAM countries.

82. The GUAM Governments remained committed to the protection of displaced populations and had undertaken important measures to strengthen national response mechanisms, Special emphasis had been placed on improving the livelihoods of displaced populations through enhanced access to health, education, shelter and employment opportunities. Given the scale and protracted nature of displacement in the GUAM area, there was an urgent need to complement GUAM Government initiatives through focused humanitarian and development assistance.

83. The impact of conflict on housing, land and property, as well as the principle of non-discrimination with regard to international displaced persons and refugees, including forced demographic changes, required a more consistent international approach to put an end to illegal practices and policies and ensure the safe and dignified return of the displaced to their homes. The States members of GUAM cooperated with various international organizations, and in particular with the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees, which was urged to remain focused on the displaced population in the GUAM area.

84. **Mr. Giacomelli da Silva** (Brazil) said that Brazil was doing its part to address the refugee and forced displacement crisis. Brazil had recently received Syrians and Haitians, just as, over a century ago, it had sheltered millions of Europeans, Arabs, Asians and Jews. Increased collaboration between the Government of Brazil and the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees included a cooperation agreement to render the procedural mechanisms of the Brazilian National Committee for Refugees more efficient. Brazil and the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees had recently signed an agreement to enhance cooperation on a special visa programme of the Government of Brazil for people affected by the Syrian conflict and to make that cooperation official. Under the programme, Brazilian consulates in the Middle East had been issuing special visas using simplified procedures since 2013 to people affected by the Syrian conflict, enabling them to travel to Brazil, where they could then present an asylum claim. The majority of refugees in Brazil were from Syria. Under the agreement, the process of granting the special visas was more efficient and secure and included measures to expedite family reunification procedures.

85. The Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees had opened a second office in Sao Paulo, which was the primary entrance hub for arriving refugees. In partnership with State and federal authorities and civil society organizations, State actors and the Office of the High Commissioner were addressing local integration issues and advancing livelihood options in urban areas, solidarity resettlement programmes and the provision of physical and legal protection, particularly for vulnerable individuals. Refugees who arrived in Brazil without financial resources were eligible to participate in the Bolsa Familia cash transfer programme.

86. Other countries in Latin America were taking similar measures. In December 2014, Brazil had hosted a ministerial meeting to celebrate the thirtieth anniversary of the Cartagena Declaration on Refugees. At that meeting, a plan of action had been adopted to enhance protection and harmonize policy across Latin America.

87. Brazil had just co-sponsored an event hosted by the Office of the High Commissioner to mark the first anniversary of the global campaign to end statelessness. When people were denied a nationality, they were denied their basic rights. There were approximately 10 million people in the world currently in that situation. The Brazilian Congress would soon consider a draft bill on the protection of stateless people that would grant the right of residence to individuals recognized as stateless by the National Committee for Refugees, after four years' residence in the country. The Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan, which aimed to build longer-term resilience among host communities and refugees, contributed both to the protection of refugees and to durable solutions.

88. Brazil also supported measures to strengthen refugees' self-reliance, livelihoods and resilience-building mechanisms through the use of cash transfers, local purchases and social safety nets to bridge the gap

between assistance and development actions. In that regard, Brazil commended the increase in the use of cash-based interventions by the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees in the context of the Syrian crisis, as well as in approximately 60 other operations throughout the world. Brazil also welcomed innovative approaches on the part of the Office of the High Commissioner to connect refugees with employment opportunities, collaborations on skill-building initiatives and sustainable rural livelihood strategies to improve access to food and income opportunities, with emphasis on operations that prioritized locally purchased food. Such interventions provided assistance while contributing to local economic development, refugees' dignity, their acceptance by host countries and the right to development.

89. Brazil was pleased that top refugee athletes would be able to compete in the 2016 Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro, as announced by the International Olympic Committee.

90. The profound sense of indignation evoked by pictures of people, including children, dying as they tried to flee conflict situations must be translated into unequivocal acts of solidarity.

91. **Mr. Plasai** (Thailand) said that Thailand, which was a member of the Executive Committee of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, had been affected by an influx of migrants in recent years, resulting in humanitarian crises. One such case had involved 3,000 migrants stranded at sea earlier in 2015 after smugglers abandoned their boats following a systematic crackdown on their criminal networks. Thailand had deployed a fleet of vessels as safe floating platforms to rescue and provide medical and humanitarian assistance.

92. In May 2015, Thailand had convened a special meeting on irregular migration in the Indian Ocean, to provide a venue to discuss systematic, integrated ways of resolving the problem. Various stakeholders had participated, including high-level representatives of Governments and international organizations, working on proposals to assist people in distress and curbing smuggling and trafficking. Thailand was gravely concerned with the possible resumption of irregular migration movement in the Indian Ocean after the monsoon season. Government agencies were seriously considering ways to resolve the issue comprehensively and sustainably, at both the national and regional levels.

93. Smuggling of people, human trafficking and irregular migration were closely linked issues. Thailand declared combating trafficking in persons to be a national priority. The law had been amended to increase the severity of punishment, include new administrative provisions to suspend the operations of businesses suspected of using trafficked victims, while conducting more thorough investigations, and increase protection of whistle-blowers from possible legal retaliation. The new law would also provide better compensation for trafficked victims by allowing the use of proceeds of crimes. New regulations had been enacted to prevent involvement by Government officials in human trafficking and to establish complaint and monitoring mechanisms.

94. A sustainable solution must address the root causes of irregular migration while safeguarding security, economic and social development, respect for human rights and adequate access to basic rights and services in migrants' home countries.

95. Thailand wished to underscore the link between migration and development, and a potential contribution to a durable solution to irregular migration through the simultaneous realization of the goals of eliminating poverty and hunger and making communities safer. Thailand had contributed humanitarian and development assistance to some at-risk communities to ensure that people did not have to leave home to further their prospects.

96. Thailand had reduced gaps in national legislation and improved administrative procedures, leading to a marked increase in the number of formerly stateless person in the country who had been granted nationality. The role of birth registration was recognized as important in guaranteeing the right of nationality. In 2014, 3,506 birth certificates had been issued to displaced persons in Thailand, and birth certificates had been issued for 48, 393 children born to non-Thai parents and 7,630 children of migrant workers.

97. **Ms. Holmes** (United States of America) said that in 2015, the United States had contributed more than $1.3 billion to assist the Office of the High Commissioner in its work worldwide. With four Level 3 emergencies, millions of refugees in the Middle East and elsewhere, waves of people arriving in Europe and an increasing number of deaths at sea,

displacement needs were greater than ever before. No Government or agency could meet the challenge alone. Nurturing and valuing longstanding partnerships while developing new ones must be the operational foundation of the work of the Office of the High Commissioner. The United States welcomed the strengthened approaches of the Office, its emphasis on comprehensive solution strategies and work with partners to improve refugees' resilience, self-reliance and prospects for durable solutions. Coordination and communication among partners was critical to the success of humanitarian operations. As needs continued to outpace resources, it would be important for the Office of the High Commissioner to articulate what it would be unable to do owing to funding gaps. The Office should strengthen its organizational capacity by pursuing a human resources policy that encouraged strong performance in emergency situations. Its increase in programme support to match the immense costs of field operations was to be commended, as was the shift from a resource-driven planning process to one based on performance and results. It should continue along that path, making objectives, standards and indicators more measurable and less subjective, as well as improving tracking and reporting on indicators, incorporating recommendations and findings from evaluations into future programming. Equally important was ensuring that persons of concern remained front and centre. The Office and its partners should continue strengthening their frameworks for ensuring accountability to all stakeholders, including beneficiaries.

98. **Mr. Moussa** (Egypt) said that at a time when the scale and scope of displacements had reached unparalleled levels, the international response fell far short of what was needed to address them. Events unfolding in Africa and the Middle East had raised concerns about the treatment of refugees, who had become victims of xenophobia, discrimination and exploitation. Protection of refugees was imperative, in accordance with the obligations enshrined in international refugee, human rights and humanitarian law. Egypt was concerned over the shrinking asylum space, particularly in some developed countries, calling on all States to respect the tenets of the international refugee regime and uphold the principle of international cooperation in sharing the burdens and responsibilities of protecting refugees, pending their voluntary return to their homeland or resettlement in third countries.

99. The 2030 Agenda provided a solid foundation for ensuring complementarity between development and humanitarian approaches, including addressing the needs of refugees and other displaced persons. Assistance should be provided to host countries to continue to provide protection to millions of refugees on behalf of the international community, to include greater material, financial and political support. Countries emerging from conflicts also needed greater support to enable them to rebuild their institutional capacities and enhance their capability to provide basic services to of all their citizens, particularly women and children. The immense influx of refugees into neighbouring countries placed a huge financial, social and security burden on those countries, which continued to shoulder those responsibilities despite challenges they had faced in recent years. Egypt currently hosted some 400,000 Syrians, including 108,000 registered refugees. All Syrians, registered or not, were entitled to services in public institutions equal to those received by Egyptians, particularly education and medical services. During the current year, there were 39,000 Syrian students enrolled in Egyptian schools, in addition to 14.000 university students. There were also nearly 2 million Sudanese and Palestinian citizens currently residing in Egypt. Egypt had spared no effort to provide the needed care and assistance for those people within its borders. There was a need to reinvigorate the initiative to complement the 1951 Convention and 1967 Protocol to realize a more equitable partnership in sharing burdens and responsibilities.

100. **Mr. Qassem Agha** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that the refugee crisis was just one aspect of the painful situation affecting the Syrian people and of efforts to exploit their suffering. Indeed, the Governments involved in fanning the flames of the crisis and shedding Syrian blood were the same Governments that had done their utmost to assault the Syrian people, and they were continuing to do so. From the outset, those Governments, some of which were Arab or located in the region, and others that were further afield, had aimed to militarize, internationalize and exploit the crisis to further their agendas in the Security Council. At the same time, those same Governments were blackmailing the international community under the pretext of the humanitarian situation in Syria, in order to use terrorism as a political weapon with the aim of destroying the Syrian State and making it into a failed State where chaos

could then be fostered, serving as a weapon to destroy the hopes of the Syrian people.

101. Reports issued by some European Governments indicated that 20 per cent of the all the refugees heading for Europe were Syrian. On the one hand, some States were shedding tears for the refugees, and on the other hand, they aimed their machine guns at them, having provided support to terrorists since the beginning of the crisis. Some had mobilized their navies, readied their armies and begun building walls along their borders to prevent the entry of those desperate people who had been forced from their homes by legions of takfiri terrorists. Others had welcomed the refugees with police truncheons and beatings. Moreover, United Nations reports had documented that some refugees in refugee camps had experienced degrading treatment.

102. It was important to ask what could be done to prevent more Syrians from leaving their homes and how to facilitate the return of Syrians to their homes. The answer was clear to all. The terrorism targeting the Syrian people must be halted. That terrorism was facilitated and financed by the Governments of States whose names were known to all. It had forced many Syrian citizens to leave their homes, villages and towns, fleeing brutal crimes perpetrated by terrorist groups. The relevant Security Council resolutions must be implemented, and the unilateral coercive measures imposed by some Governments must be lifted.

103. **Ms. Khvan** (Russian Federation) said that prospects for a reduction in the numbers of refugees and internally displaced persons were dim. It was therefore important to preserve existing international protection mechanisms such as the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol thereto and prevent their erosion in the face of regional migration crises in a number of countries.

104. Assistance to refugees, asylum seekers and stateless persons was a priority area in the humanitarian field, and engagement with the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees, the key international body for protection of those categories of people, was of great significance. The work of the Office, particularly in situations of humanitarian crisis in various countries and regions, was effective, and the High Commissioner had done much to strengthen the position and standing of the Office during his 10 years in office. Engagement with the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees should continue within the existing mandate on the basis of the principles of neutrality, a humane approach, independence and impartiality. The Executive Committee should play a key role in international protection.

105. The Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees was doing important work to respond to the Syrian crisis and implement a regional assistance plan for Syrian refugees, as well as in aiding internally displaced persons on Syrian territory. The Russian Federation reaffirmed its position that the only way to achieve a radical improvement in the situation of Syrian refugees and internally displaced placed persons would involve a political settlement. The international community had an obligation to do its utmost to establish a constructive internal Syrian dialogue. Barring such dialogue, humanitarian efforts would be in vain and would only exhaust donor resources needed for response to possible humanitarian crises in other parts of the world.

106. The Russian Federation took particular note of the situation of internally displaced persons within Syria and welcomed the work that the Office of the High Commissioner was carrying out with that category of Syrian citizens. In 2014-2015, the Russian Federation had contributed a total of $1 million from its annual voluntary donor contribution to programmes of the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees for Syrian internally displaced persons, to be carried out jointly with the Syrian Government and the national Red Crescent Society. In 2013, the Russian Government had allocated some $6.5 million in assistance to the Government of Lebanon and some $3.5 million to Jordan for the needs of Syrian refugees.

107. The humanitarian situation in Ukraine remained acute, resulting in massive population movements out of the country. Most of those fleeing southeastern Ukraine were coming to the Russian Federation, with more than 1.1 million Ukrainians arriving in the Russian Federation since April 2014. About one million of those had requested determination of their status from the Federal Migration Service of the Russian Federation. As of 29 October 2015, some 406,000 citizens of Ukraine had requested refugee status or temporary asylum. The majority were not hastening to return to their homeland. Only stability in southeastern Ukraine and a peaceful settlement based on the Minsk Agreements would enable the refugees to return to their homes.

108. The Russian Federation had all the resources necessary to receive Ukrainian citizens fleeing the conflict. The Government appreciated the measures taken by the Office of the High Commissioner to draw the attention of the international community to the Ukrainian refugee problem and its measured, non-politicized approach to the situation in Ukraine. It should continue providing objective information on the humanitarian consequences of the crisis, which had led to large-scale migration flows to the Russian Federation and other countries, and also promote the reintegration of returning refugees and internally displaced persons to the southeastern part of the country.

109. Eliminating statelessness in Latvia and Estonia should remain a priority for the Office of the High Commissioner. The Russian Federation regularly sent funds from its donor fees to cover the relevant programmes.

110. The Office of the High Commissioner should continue work to expand the donor base, including by stepping up work with potential private donors. The principle of voluntary donations should remain unchanged.

111. **Ms. Halter** (Switzerland) said that a shared vision and joint efforts at the bilateral and multilateral levels would be required in order to address the constantly evolving humanitarian challenges in various regions. All decisions should be rooted in a desire to protect persons displaced by those crises and to ensure respect for their dignity and rights. Guided by the principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence, the international community should develop a refugee protection system that respected the diversity and specificities of peoples around the world. In that regard, the conclusions of the Executive Committee of the Programme of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees could serve to bridge the gaps between the various rules, principles and traditions guiding the approach to meeting the needs of displaced persons.

112. In light of the urgency of the challenges mentioned by the High Commissioner, it was important to reaffirm the principles of joint responsibility and burden-sharing and to acknowledge the significant efforts being made by the Governments and populations of refugee-hosting countries. It should also be borne in mind that humanitarian action would never be a substitute for compliance with the obligation of States to protect their populations and to do everything within their power to achieve lasting political solutions. States must scrupulously respect the rule of law, international humanitarian and refugee law and human rights, in particular the obligation of parties to a conflict to protect the civilian population.

113. The available funding for humanitarian aid was insufficient to meet the immediate and growing needs of the civilian population affected by the humanitarian disaster in the Syrian Arab Republic. Switzerland had increased its aid budget by $70 million. The increased funding requirements of the humanitarian system were a clear indication of a persistent lack of political will to address the root causes of crises and conflicts. Achieving a lasting solution to the Syrian conflict was a priority for her Government, which continued to support peace processes initiated by the United Nations and stood ready to host new negotiations.

114. In October 2015, 110 States had adopted the Agenda for the Protection of Cross-Border Displaced Persons in the Context of Disasters and Climate Change (Protection Agenda) at the Nansen Initiative Global Consultation. Switzerland was committed to ensuring that the outcomes of that Initiative were incorporated into relevant multilateral processes, such as the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the World Humanitarian Summit.

115. **Mr. Kang** (Republic of Korea) said that the importance of addressing the root causes of the current humanitarian crisis could not be over emphasized. The international community must make a greater effort to prevent and resolve conflicts and displacement. It must also promote sustainable development that left no one behind and reached the most disadvantaged first. Reaching forcibly displaced persons would therefore be an important step towards the successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

116. There was a need for a more inclusive framework for partnership between humanitarian and development actors in emerging crises. In that connection, his delegation called on UNHCR to play a constructive role in the preparations for and follow-up to the World Humanitarian Summit. UNHCR, which had made notable achievements in spite of its increasingly challenging operating environment, should also

continue to make every effort to ensure universal respect for the principle of non-refoulement.

117. **Mr. Canay** (Turkey) said that the number of refugees and persons in situations of protracted displacement was likely to increase even further, given the continuing conflicts in various parts of the world. The provision of assistance to those in need should be seen as a long-term investment in collective peace and security. Displacement was primarily a political, development and integration challenge and, consequently, could not be resolved by the humanitarian community alone; a comprehensive, long-term approach involving cooperation between political and development actors was required. Furthermore, the refugee crisis could therefore only be addressed through joint action on the basis of shared responsibility, as it affected countries of origin, transit and destination.

118. An important element of the solution would be to ensure sustainable livelihoods for displaced persons. Humanitarian and development assistance should also be more localized and user-oriented in order to take better account of the cultural specificities of displaced peoples and ensure their dignity. The World Humanitarian Summit to be held in Turkey in May 2016 could provide an opportunity to save lives by improving the response to the humanitarian crisis.

119. His country was currently receiving the largest number of refugees under the UNHCR mandate. While his Government would maintain an open-door policy towards those fleeing violence, it was important to underscore that the magnitude of the displacement had exceeded the capacity of any one country to absorb. Turkey had already disbursed nearly $8 billion as a result of the crisis but had received only $417 million from the international community. His Government was providing food, non-food items, health care, education services, psychosocial assistance and vocational training to 260,000 Syrian refugees living in 25 temporary protection centres. The nearly 1.9 million Syrians living outside those centres also benefitted from temporary protection measures. Furthermore, the Turkish coast guard had rescued 55,000 refugees from the sea thus far in 2015, at a monthly cost 5 million euros. There was an urgent need for additional schools, classrooms and teachers, as over two-thirds of the nearly 600,000 school-aged Syrian children in his country were currently missing out on an education. Turkey therefore reiterated its call for burden- and responsibility-sharing and, in that regard, looked forward to the General Assembly discussion on global awareness of the tragedies of irregular migrants in the Mediterranean basin, with specific emphasis on Syrian asylum seekers.

120. **Mr. Hassani Nejad Pirkouhi** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that causes of the massive increase in the number of refugees and displaced persons included instability and insecurity resulting from conflict, foreign occupation and terrorism, as well as underdevelopment and the destruction of infrastructure. His country had been dealing with the economic, social and security implications of hosting a large refugee population for more than three decades. His Government had provided the best possible care to those refugees, despite a lack of sufficient international assistance. More than 400,000 refugee children had been registered at Iranian schools in 2015 and over 40,000 young refugees were studying at Iranian universities. All refugees received medical insurance and health coverage, and those suffering from chronic diseases received special care.

121. Voluntary repatriation in safety and dignity was the best and most viable solution to the refugee problem. Supporting the Government of Afghanistan in establishing peace, stability and economic prosperity was therefore a priority for his Government. He urged the international community to establish the conditions for the voluntary repatriation of Afghan refugees. In particular, donor countries should pay due attention to the importance of supporting the wellbeing and livelihood opportunities of the Afghan people: the current level of financial support provided to returning refugees was not a strong incentive and would not support the long-term reintegration of the few who did opt for voluntary repatriation.

122. Resettlement in third countries was a manifestation of global participation in the resolution of the refugee problem, yet only around 1,000 of the approximately 1 million refugees living in the Islamic Republic of Iran had been resettled in 2014. The process of selecting refugees for resettlement should be carried out in such a way as to offer better protection to the most vulnerable, in particular refugees with special medical needs. His Government strongly called for the establishment of an annual quota for the resettlement of refugees residing in the Islamic Republic of Iran.

123. In spite of its own development challenges, his country had shouldered much of what should be a shared responsibility and joint undertaking. The international community should demonstrate compassion, commitment and support by taking in persons who had been displaced and giving them the necessary support. It must also seek to ensure the peaceful resolution of political crises, which was the only way to ultimately resolve the refugee problem. In addition, donor countries should take immediate action to promote voluntary repatriation and resettlement.

124. **Mr. Mseke** (United Republic of Tanzania) said that his Government remained committed to the fulfilment of its international obligations and had accepted over 110,800 refugees fleeing persecution in 2015. However, it was concerned that insufficient international funding for the Tanzanian refugee operation was putting the economic and security interests of the country at risk. He called on the international community to fulfil its collective responsibility to address the refugee problem by increasing its support for his country's efforts.

125. Tanzania had granted naturalization to over 200,000 former Burundian refugees in 2014 as part of its effort to achieve a durable solution to the refugee situation in the country. However, the socioeconomic integration of that population would require significant infrastructure investment from the Government and the international community in certain parts of the country. It would be important to ensure that community-level development efforts benefitted both newly naturalized Tanzanians and the established population and that all segments of society participated in development planning. International development actors should seek to play a significant role in that regard. He urged Member States to take note of his Government's historic efforts to integrate refugees, which had gone largely unnoticed by the international community and members of the Solutions Alliance, as they could serve as a blueprint for durable solutions at the global level.

126. His Government welcomed the offer by the United States to accept over 32,000 refugees from the Democratic Republic of the Congo living in Tanzania and called on other resettlement countries to increase their resettlement quotas.

127. **Mr. Thein** (Myanmar) said that his Government was concerned about the high number of displaced persons around the world. The extremely dangerous situation that had been faced by the boat people stranded in the Andaman Sea in May 2015 highlighted the dangers of people smuggling and human trafficking in the region. On that occasion, his Government had rescued and provided temporary shelter and assistance to around 1,000 people, regardless of their race or religion. 700 of those persons had already been repatriated, with the close cooperation of the country concerned. To address the trafficking problem, systems should be put in place to enable labourers to move legally between countries and bilateral and regional cooperation on the issue should be enhanced.

128. It should be noted that certain agencies and media outlets were publishing misleading information based on speculation and unverified data. In fact, the boat people rescued in May 2015 were economic migrants, and the root cause of the crisis was human trafficking and people smuggling carried out by organized crime rings. His Government had taken preventive measures to combat that problem, such as exchanging intelligence with neighbouring States, taking legal action against traffickers and rolling out extensive awareness campaigns in the areas most at risk. Since the adoption of its trafficking in persons law in 2005, Myanmar had collaborated with partners and neighbouring countries through bilateral and regional mechanisms and had developed action plans and programmes of work in the areas of policy, prevention, protection, return and reintegration, and prosecution. The 2005 law was currently being revised to reflect current realities and emerging challenges. His Government's plans for social and economic development would also help to combat the problem. His Government had made a commitment to cooperate in good faith with States in the region and the wider international community on those issues.

129. **Mr. Gumende** (Mozambique) said that one in every 122 humans was now either a refugee, internally displaced or seeking asylum, but the international response was inadequate. For example, funding for UNHCR emergency appeals for Africa had barely surpassed 30 per cent of the projected needs.

130. One of the most visible consequences of conflict in the world was the dramatic rise in the number of refugees undertaking dangerous sea journeys. Many of the root causes of the problem were systemic and could not be addressed through short-term, piecemeal approaches. Moreover, no single country acting in isolation could hope to effectively respond to the

challenges and opportunities created by human mobility in a globalized world.

131. The first step in addressing the problem of displaced persons should be the implementation of a comprehensive approach to migration based on strong international cooperation, in particular at the regional level. States must also redouble their efforts to facilitate the safe, orderly and responsible mobility envisaged in the 2030 Agenda, in order to promote sustainable development and ensure that no one was left behind. The problem of refugees and forced displacement should no longer been seen as simply a humanitarian issue; in order to address the development challenges faced by the developing countries hosting 80 per cent of the world's refugees, development actors must become involved earlier in the displacement cycle and refugees should be equipped to become productive members of their host societies. To prevent people smuggling, it would also be important for States to provide more opportunities for safe and legal migration for persons of all skill levels, including for the purposes of family reunification and higher education.

132. The international community should work to address the root causes of conflicts, given that secondary waves of migration, such as that of Syrians leaving their initial host countries to travel to Europe, were often the result of a loss of hope in the possibility of returning home combined with increasingly difficult living conditions in host countries. Political solutions were key to the resolution of most refugee and displacement crises. The peacemaking role of the United Nations must therefore be reinforced, in line with the principle of the peaceful settlement of international disputes and the principle of refraining from the threat or use of force in international relations. The United Nations had been instrumental in the large-scale of repatriation of Mozambican refugees following the 1992 peace agreement. As a country at peace, Mozambique was making every effort to fulfil its obligations as a host country.

133. **Mr. Pantelejevs** (Latvia), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that it was regrettable that the Russian Federation, which was not a party to the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons or the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness, had made unfounded accusations against his country. Latvian legislation had been brought into conformity with those conventions and fully protected the rights of the 176 stateless persons in Latvia. The former citizens of the Soviet Union living in Latvia who did not possess any citizenship were in no way stateless persons, as the protection offered by the Latvian Government went beyond that required by the 1954 Convention. His country supported efforts to end statelessness around the world and urged the international community not to let misinformation distract it from the crisis relating to displaced persons.

134. **Ms. Tasuja** (Estonia), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that her Government placed great importance on societal integration and the promotion of Estonian citizenship. It had been working for many years to address the issue of undetermined citizenship, including by simplifying the naturalization process for legal residents. The number of young people with undetermined citizenship was very small. It was also worth noting that Estonia was one of the few countries that granted all long-term residents, regardless of their citizenship status, the right to vote in local elections.

135. **Mr. Lukiyantsev** (Russian Federation) said that his delegation was merely requesting that Latvia and Estonia fulfil existing recommendations of international human rights expert mechanisms with regard to their treatment of ethnic minorities, having to do specifically with the elimination of the shameful status of non-citizenship.

The meeting rose at 5.55 p.m.